Wabash Reflections



A Newsletter brought to you by the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission (WRHCC). As the onset of a new year ushers in another planning & training season, let's take a moment to consider some advances made along the Corridor during this past year. Here are a few notes from around the Corridor:



- ❖ Tippecanoe County A Fall De-Trash & A Future of Designs
- ❖ Update on Cass County News from Logansport
- ❖ Developments in Allen County Eagle Marsh Underway & Fort Wayne Hosts Greenway Summit
- Notes and Quotes

Tippecanoe County – A Fall De-Trash & A Future of Designs

Our usually steady source of information on cleaning our favorite river has been "out" as a result of some non-river related events. Regardless, it appears from the usual news outlets, a "mini"-clean-up did occur in the early fall of a small dump site on the banks of the Wabash in Tippecanoe County. Arranged by stalwart clean-up expert Cecily Schneider, and her contacts within the local parks department, the recently discovered concentration of trash and refuse was removed before the winter and following high water would have spread the material. Great work in avoiding what could have become a much larger problem!

Meanwhile, Purdue University Landscape Architecture Program students, from the Senior Urban Design Studio of Professor Kim Wilson, were hard at work preparing a number of different designs for the Wabash area waterfronts of Lafayette and West Lafayette. The resulting team projects, entitled "Embracing the Wabash", were presented to a full-house crowd on a very snowy evening on December 8, 2005. The Lafayette Theater, a historic gem in the midst of its own re-birth, played host to no less than six competing views of renovated river banks and alternate "viewsheds". The sponsoring Wabash River Enhancement Corporation, as well as the Wabash Parkway Commission, both cities' mayors, the County Commissioners, and even a statehouse Wabash hero, local representative Sheila Klinker, were in attendance or represented at the gathering. The designs, electronic copies of which were promised for the Heritage Corridor Commission's library, will be used to inspire river-oriented development and improve the connection across the river between the two cities.

Tippecanoe statistical info may be found at: http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/tippecanoe/

Update on Cass County – News from Logansport

Little Turtle Waterway continues to expand with the addition of the Cap the Confluence project.

The confluence of the Eel and Wabash Rivers in downtown Logansport has long been an overgrown dump. Little Turtle Waterway Corp. (LTWC) volunteers dreamed of bringing the confluence back to a pre-settlement look, with grasses, willows, and oaks.

After clearing the area of ailanthus, honeysuckle, and box elder last year, LTWC volunteers landed a grant from the local McTaggart Foundation to pay for heavy equipment time and geotextile fabric. The high part of the confluence was graded and tree stumps removed, while a few desirable dogwoods and oaks were saved. A trench was dug around the project perimeter. Water-permeable geotextile fabric was laid over the area, with the edges dropping into the trenches. The edges were secured by filling the trenches with rip-rap. Volunteers then spread 6"



of topsoil for new grass seed, with a 10' wide wood chip trail along the edge. The project is now seeded.

This area now makes the beauty of the confluence of the rivers accessible to LTW trail users. The grasses will be moved high, only needing attention a few times per year.

Another development in Cass County is the decision of City and County governments to partner on paying for consultant work to build a trail to connect LTW with another trail on the Eel River. The tasks of defining the best route and developing cost estimates will be complete in January. This important link is part of Cass County's future trail system, much of which will be along the Wabash River.

A "Thumbnail" on Cass County may be found at: http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/cass/ while the Chamber of Commerce maintains a website full of interesting details like:

"The first permanent white settler arrived in the area in 1826... Colonel John B. Duret proposed that the settlement be named for Captain Logan, a Shawnee Indian who had been a friend to the settlers. [Other] early settler[s] agreed with Duret, but suggested the word "Port" be added because of the town's unique location between the [Wabash and Eel] rivers. Hence the name Logan's Port, or Logansport." For more, see http://www.logan-casschamber.com/

Developments in Allen County

Eagle Marsh Wetland Project Underway

675-Acre Wetland Will Help Control Flooding, Create Wildlife Habitat

(Article & photo from Fort Wayne Journal Gazette)



The Little River Wetlands Project has purchased 675 acres of floodplain in southwest Allen County to restore to natural wetlands. Closing on the property occurred on August 15, 2005.

Plans are underway to restore the 675-acre floodplain on the city's southwest side to natural wetlands. Fort Wayne-based Little River Wetlands Project spearheaded the effort to purchase and restore the acreage, known as Eagle Marsh, located in Aboite and Wayne townships. Eagle Marsh is adjacent to Fox Island County Park as well as the restored wetland on Engle road. Altogether, it will create a 1,400-acre natural area in Allen County.

"This project will have a significant impact on flood control, water quality and wildlife habitat in Allen County and downstream to the Wabash River," said Paul McAfee, director for the Little River Wetlands Project. "It will also provide wonderful opportunities for walking, birding, photography and nature study."

Partners in this project are the federal Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), which is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Indiana Heritage Trust program, and the Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. WRP will provide \$1,200,000 toward the purchase price and will provide the restoration work. The Indiana Heritage Trust program is funded by the blue environmental license plates with the eagle on them. They are contributing \$220,000 and will retain a 50% simple fee ownership of the property. The Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy has committed \$250,000. The Little River Wetlands Project has fundraised [and continues to fundraise] for the remaining amount.

"More than 84% of Indiana's wetlands have been drained over the years, endangering many species of plants and animals" said McAfee. "With our efforts at Eagle Marsh, we are restoring significant areas for the survival of these species."

If you would like to help or get involved with the Little River Wetlands Project, please contact Paul McAfee at 478-2515.

Allen County's thumbnail information is at: http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/allen/

Fort Wayne hosted a regional Greenway Summit on November 14, 2005

Mayor Graham Richard lead Fort Wayne's second annual Greenway Summit on November 14 in a local greenway park, Shoaff Park, in north Fort Wayne. The "Summit", open to the public, brought together elected officials, greenway and trail advocates, and the community to discuss the current trail system and plans for trails in Northeast Indiana.



"Greenways and trails are valuable assets to our region. We must capitalize on this tremendous opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of many," said Mayor Richard. "We must be committed to better physical fitness and exercise. The greenway provides us with links to parks, schools and neighborhoods. It also helps us promote a Green City that's more environmentally friendly. Businesses look to

communities that have greenway resources. Greenways and trails can help us retain and gain jobs and stimulate economic growth."

The City is investing in the Rivergreenway system. City crews are repaving the greenway and making landscaping and signage upgrades. With greenway volunteer groups, the plan is to increase the miles of trails and greenways from 18 to more than 100. More than 40 Greenway Ranger volunteers help keep the greenway clean and more user-friendly. The volunteers check a portion of the system once a week to make sure there aren't any serious problems. Earlier this year, the Fort Wayne Police Department began using bike patrols on the greenway.

At last year's Summit, Mayor Richard announced a \$2 million commitment to improve and add trails and greenways. The City's financial support combined with other funding sources could bring the total to \$8 million.

Notes & Quotes (from Executive Director Ron James)

Your Commission is embarked on the final push to open the Wabash Water Trail on a widespread basis. A timetable has been proposed to reach this goal in the spring of 2006. If you are in charge of, or know of the person or entity in charge of, any access point, amenity or bridge which should be included on the WT maps, please email the necessary contact information to execdir@wrhcc.IN.gov. We have signs for access points & bridges that will need posting, also. If you could contribute an hour or two to that effort, we will be organizing that effort for the early spring. Let us hear from you!

While I'm on the need for many hands to make light work, other tasks currently awaiting your effort include updating the Commission databases – both for email and hardcopy newsletter contacts – and distributing our interpretive brochure to appropriate rest areas, welcome centers and visitor bureaus. We'll be setting up Water Trail map distribution in the coming year, also. If you have a few hours to contribute, contact me via email (noted above) to make arrangements.

With the coming of cold weather, I annually think of great books I've been meaning to, and surely this winter will get around to, read. This season I'm thinking of river lore – Twain, Goerthe, even Hay's Gilligan Goose. One concept you can't miss in all these: the river never changes but is never the same. If you dip your hand in the water, it is the same water that bathed mastodons and, yet, is water that will never be in that spot again. When we make our "mark" on the Wabash of tomorrow, we must recall this lesson. Will the river we leave be the same yet changed? Will that change be better or worse?

All told, it's shaping up to be the Year of the Wabash (so much more to come, there isn't room here). Have a GREAT 2006! Don't forget the Commission meeting on January 11th in Conference Room #1, Indiana Government Center South, Washington Street, Indianapolis. See you on the river...THIS year!